

SOLOMON ISLANDS DEVELOPMENT PLAN

1975 - 1979

AN ANALYSIS

AND

ANOTHER DEVELOPMENT PLAN

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I. HISTORICAL AND GEOGRAPHICAL BACKGROUND

The Solomon Islands consists of ten large islands or clusters of islands, lying in the form of a double chain extending over 900 miles of ocean, northwest to south east.¹ The total land area of the Solomons is 11,500 square miles with a population of 196,708 people.² The boundaries of the Island group enclose a sea area of some 250,000 square miles.

These Islands first entered European history in 1568 but were unheard and unseen by Europeans for another 200 years. Even then visiting explorers were few and far between. In the early 19th century whalers became more and more frequent but sustained European contact came only in the late 1880's due to sandelwood trade and recruiting sugarcane workers for Queensland, Australia. Great Britain reluctantly made it a Protectorate in 1893 due, in part, to the excesses in the recruiting as then practiced. The British colonial philosophy of making colonies pay their own way was no less true for these islands. Private commercial enterprises especially coconut plantation system began the first phase of development. By 1940, for instance, Lever Pacific Plantations had 20,000 acres under cultivation. Chinese entrepreneurs, mostly from the crown colony of Hong Kong, took over the small business enterprises which European planters couldn't cope with and still have enough profit.

The Second World War battle of Guadalcanal was critical to both the world and the islands. It became the significant turning point in that war and it also ushered in a new development era for the Solomons. A movement

¹Judy Tudor, ed. Pacific Islands Year Book, 10th edition Pacific Publications, Sydney, p. 433, 1968.

²The Solomon News Drum, no. 62, 1975, p. 1.

called Marching Rule, demanded self government and a degree of economic development.³ The Solomon people, up to this time, had had limited involvement in the development process but it was not to be so in the future. Although the Government crushed the Marching Rule movement, the aspirations created by it were not forgotten.

After the War, it was clear that a total dependence upon a plantation system as a development technique would not work. The local population would have to be part of the development scheme and cash crops other than coconut would fuel the new development. In 1958 a Colonial Development and Welfare Fund provided the finances to inaugurate a cocoa scheme which would be at least the equal of coconut revenue.⁴ It became instead a fiasco much to the fault of the agricultural department. Also, a rice scheme in the early '60s came to grief. By 1967 "the senior expatriate officials of Government, in the light of the relatively slow growth in export cash crop production in the village sector, began looking at ex-patriate enterprise and foreign investment to increase overseas earning as well as further the diversification of the export base and provide revenue by way of duties for infrastructural development."⁵ This theory of development was spelled out in government supplied supplement in the Australian Financial Review outlining investment opportunities in the Solomons.⁶ Both the 5th Development Plan (1968-1970) as well as the 6th (1971-1973) reflected this philosophy of development.

³Hugh Laracy, "Marching Rule and the Missions," The Journal of Pacific History, vol. 7, 1971, p. 98.

⁴Tudor, op. cit., p. 439.

⁵Murray Bathgate, "The Place of the Village Sector in the National Economy," Ch. 3, unpublished thesis for the University of Wellington, 1975, p. 4.

⁶The Australian Financial Review, "Survey of the Solomon Islands," May 22, 1967.

The Solomons, as it were, came full circle in development philosophy. In the early stages only expatriate enterprises constituted development but war and changing political attitudes world wide altered such thinking. After a sincere but ill-designed scheme for local based development failing, return to the expatriate model re-entered the picture.

Where does the present Solomon Island National Development Plan - 1975-79 stand?

II. NATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PLAN⁷

A. Texts

There are three volumes to the Plan:

Vol. 1	<u>Starting Points</u>	The economic and social conditions of the Solomon Islands in the light of the government objectives for 1975-79.
Vol. 2	<u>Building the Nation</u>	The objectives and policies of the Solomon Islands government.
Vol. 3	<u>Diagrams, Pictures and Maps</u>	

B. The Heart of the Matter

Although quite informative with objectives and policies covering almost all sectors of development, the paper limits itself to the principles and aims enunciated as they are for the rural sector.

First of all let it be said the Plan's objectives and principles can only be praised and are quite difficult to fault in theory. It is only

⁷Solomon Island National Development Plan 1975-79, Office of the Chief Minister, Honiara, April 1975. Known henceforth as NDP or PLAN.

in the implementation given under the target dates that discrepancies between good theory and questionable practice begin to appear. For instance, self-reliance and local participation are two of the eight principles guiding government action. Food production is listed as the first element of self-reliance and yet in the agriculture plan there is nothing on or about how to improve local food stuff save bettering market techniques. The whole concept of the Green Revolution and how it could be applied to the very area considered essential is never spelled out. It simply assumes the only factor inhibiting peasant support for increasing food stuffs are market forces.

A third principle, the leveling up or the equal distribution of development, becomes something else again when translated into concrete terms. There is an assumption in the plan that attention paid to agriculture, livestock and forestry work somehow equates with the rural sector. Although all of these activities occur in the rural areas there is no automatic transferal to the village sector. Indeed, some of the plans go directly against the good of the rural areas in the long run. Too many of the sections of the Plan are tilted to an overseas market and only indirectly and secondarily to the rural sector. In fact, the very emphasis on cattle, for instance, has been at best a mixed blessing. The coastal grounds normally used for subsistence cropping have to compete with cattle grazing thereby making future population growth a more formidable problem. On the whole more than two-thirds of the Plan has to do with gaining enough financial independence through overseas earnings in an atmosphere where more than 90 per cent of the people are in the subsistence form of livelihood. Rather than equalizing the distribution of development, it seems the Plan is following a model which ensures inequality.

Cultural promotion and preservation are enunciated as essential principles governing all types of development. The on-going lesson of Bougainville, the island immediately to the west of the Solomons forming part of the Papua New Guinea island country, with its huge copper mine seems to have been lost on the administration. If an island community of 90,000 has been so traumatized--politically, socially and economically--can the planners be seriously thinking of allowing Mitsui bauxite proposal for Rennell and Bellona to be accepted?⁸ These islands are fractionally the size of Bougainville and will surely be traumatized. Where then are the principles of cultural promotion and preservation? For a people who were for centuries fiercely independent and built a culture upon such a foundation, now, must re-evaluate and re-direct their cultural heritage.⁹

The very first objective stated in the Plan is:

"The main objective is to achieve self-government and independence on sound political and economic foundations, so that nationhood can be genuine and stable."¹⁰

Yet, must it not be questioned when the very philosophy or really the assumptions of development have been found wanting a number of Third World countries? What are some of these assumptions?

C. Assumptions

1. Contrary to rhetoric, the Solomons are following a development model known as the "Trickle Effect." This model dictates development

⁸Ibid., vol. 2, p. 26. At this writing, the Mitsui bauxite proposal has been set aside temporarily. The company has asked permission to keep its heavy equipment in Rennell. ("Mitsui Still Interested in Solomons Bauxite," Pacific Island Monthly, Sept. 1977, p. 60.)

⁹Denis Fisk, "The Solomons at the Cross Roads with Riches in the Ground," Pacific Island Monthly, vol. 47, no. 4, April 1976, p. 11.

¹⁰NDP, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 1.

emphasizing cash crops--by foreign capital which will be taxed to produce a balanced budget and necessary economic infrastructure in the countryside. Historically such a development scheme has produced an economy of dependence which creates more and deeper inequalities between the urban and rural sectors than now exist.¹¹

2. There is a blind assurance that development must proceed from the urban and then travel to the countryside despite the growing pessimism that such is not necessarily the case.

3. A sense of rapidity, an air of urgency is apparent so that unless the country gets on this road to development something disastrous may occur. It is safe to say that following the Plan will ensure a non-answer to the population explosion and in a real way complicate it. As stated before, coastal lands traditionally subsistence crop land is now being taken by the government approved cattle scheme project.

The present Plan is more part of the problem of development than a solution. As one recent author states:

The Solomon Islands are going through the most convulsed period in their history, facing, after more than 70 years of somnolent colonialism, the realities of emerging into the world around them. Swift withdrawal is underway by the UK from its former protectorate; foreigners are discovering some of the prizes of these quite large, fertile and mineral-rich island and their seas; improved health--probably the most significant change brought by colonialism--has resulted in a galloping birthrate; the politics of a legislature only a few years dominated by local people is confused and still lacking in firm purpose.¹²

It is one thing to pick out the faults and still another to establish a workable alternative. The following pages attempt to set up ANOTHER

¹¹cf Ketih Griffin, "Underdevelopment in History," from The Political Economy of Development and Underdevelopment, ed. Charles K. Wilber, Random House, New York 1973.

¹²Fisk, op.cit., p. 11.

DEVELOPMENT which will join urban/rural as an integrated whole. Basic to this concept is having a rural plan which not only concerns rural aspirations but starts there and then goes out to the urban. ANOTHER DEVELOPMENT cannot be limited to mere economic growth. It seeks to be authentic; it must be complete: "integral, that is it has to promote the good of every man and of the whole man."¹³

III. ANOTHER DEVELOPMENT

A. INTRODUCTION

The strongest criticism of the National Development Plan is that it is not a plan. On the contrary, it is but an official acceptance of a past system which continues to deepen and aggravate the rural/urban inequalities with a vague hope that agriculture will somehow help the rural areas. This contention can be illustrated by examples from the agriculture sector of the plan.

Village people constitute more than 90 per cent of the Solomon population and are mainly concerned with subsistence gardening and less so with cash crop production. In 1970 when the gross domestic product (GDP) of the Solomons at market prices was estimated at \$29 million, the value of subsistence production within this was calculated to be as high as \$13.2 million or 45 per cent.¹⁴ Yet, the Plan does little or nothing to sustain and enhance subsistence production. Quite the contrary.

¹³Pope Paul VI, On the Development of Peoples, National Catholic Welfare Conference, Washington, 1967, p. 14.

¹⁴Murray Bathgate, op. cit., Chapter 3, p. 1.

Honiara, the only designated urban area, depends more on rice, bread, and biscuits than on traditional root crops. This acceptance of non-indigenous foodstuffs in favor of the traditional nutritious root crops is more expensive and creates an unhealthy dependency on overseas food. Government's policy is to increase reliance on costly imported foodstuffs at the expense of the subsistence ones. The agricultural role envisaged for the village is limited to cash crops: copra, cocoa, condiments and cattle. Of the four only condiments are not land intensive. All the others compete with subsistence crop land to the detriment of them. When cocoa was pushed in the '60s, garden lands closest to the villages, normally their garden land, was used in preference to lands deeper in the bush. In retrospect the Agriculture Department conceded such a procedure was a mistake. Yet, the same pattern emerges in cattle production.¹⁵ Prime subsistence crop land is allotted for cattle grazing. With the latest census figures showing the extraordinary high annual increase of 3.7 per cent, the use of traditional crop land for cash cropping is less than helpful.¹⁶

Politics above all other considerations have dictated such agriculture policies. Great Britain, wishing to leave these islands as quickly as possible, must reduce its dependence on external aid which now comes to more than 30 per cent of the total budget.¹⁷ Subsistence cropping finds no place in such an atmosphere. Only cash crops bringing in overseas earnings are actively encouraged with subsidies, grants and agricultural extension workers.

¹⁵Denis Fisk, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

¹⁶The Solomons News Drum, no. 62, April 23, 1976, p. 1.

¹⁷Bathgate, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

Subsistence crops must depend upon local expertise completely. Hence, it can be readily seen that the traditional agricultural sector, the life blood of the rural area, is not only given a low priority but is being led down a dangerous path of development.

Honiara, the one designated urban area, attracts \$301 of government funds per person to \$100 for the villager each year.¹⁸ The present Plan continues in the same direction only more so. Nor has this fact been lost or unseen by the locals. The number of people migrating to Honiara over the last six years has increased Honiara's population by 35 per cent.¹⁹ It has become the fastest growing area in the Solomons with no hope of changing or even slowing the rate with the inauguration of the present Plan.

B. RURAL STRATEGY

As stated before, there is no overall development plan just an official stamp of approval for a system found wanting in other developing countries. This misdevelopment plan comprises two parts:

- 1) viewing the urban area as a separate entity apart from the rural context it resides in, and
- 2) viewing the rural area simply as a supplier of produce and labor for the urban market.

A comprehensive rural/urban strategy must begin with the rural and not the urban part. Most urban strategies exist by default of a vigorous rural strategy. The following paragraphs will outline a rural plan and return to a development plan which views rural and urban realities as mutually interdependent equal partners striving for equity of a people.

¹⁸These figures were given by Murray Bathgate in his Changing Melanesia class of Fall '76.

¹⁹The Solomons News Drum, op. cit., p. 1.

A rural strategy is one of overlapping elements which are separated and isolated for easier study. Such a plan for the Solomons must contain a mixture of the following elements:

- 1) Structural innovation
- 2) Agricultural bias
- 3) Communal social system
- 4) Rural balance

1) Structural Innovation

The rural areas, especially the village sector, are underrepresented in affairs of state. In spite of electing their own representatives, the structure of government is oriented to an urban philosophy. The vast majority of Legislative Assembly members, 34 out of 36 members, come from the rural area yet the overwhelming emphasis is still urban. A structural guarantee for rural rights could be legislated. Equating an Agricultural Department or the Minister of Agriculture as representing rural interests has been shown as false and misleading. Agriculture policies are dictated by politics of outside concerns.

The major structural change would be to have a Minister of Villages (MV) of the same cabinet rank as other ministers.²⁰ As with other ministries, the Minister of Villages' portfolio carries an annual budget which would be used to partially fund:

- a) Rural research
- b) Village projects
- c) Council of Chiefs

²⁰There is a Minister of Home Affairs whose orientation is internal security and not village life as such.

- d) National Work Corps
- e) Agricultural quota system
- a) Rural Research

The weakest link in rural development is that little hard information is available. Everyone thinks because he's from the countryside, he's an expert on what is going on in the village. Yet, rural problems are mounting and possible solutions are unformulated, much less implemented. An on-going research unit established and directed by the Minister of Villages' office could set priorities for different areas.²¹

- b) Village Projects

The Solomons have a Loans Board but few loans make their way to the village level except business ventures. The Minister of Villages' office would focus its attention on all types of projects: social, economic, recreational, etc., which could restore quality living in the village.

- c) Council of Chiefs

Legislative Assembly members have requested often that government recognize the traditional leaders neglected by the first British Colonialists. As one member stated: "Chiefs are taking part in some development but they should also be placed in the national and local governments."²² A Minister of Villages could activate this neglected but necessary aspect of Solomonese custom by having them authorize rural research; e.g., documenting the agricultural production/consumption patterns of their areas.

²¹A Resource Center in Wainoni Bay, Makira, recently begun by the Catholic Church is one of the few efforts to tap rural expertise and talent.

²²The Drum, op. cit., no. 15, May 10, 1975, p. 2.

d) National Work Corps

In the latest census figures over 54 per cent of the population is under 18 years old and the trend will continue.²³ At the very time there is a 3.7 per cent increase in the population the economy grows at less than 2 per cent annually. The nation's youth cannot find meaningful employment and the rural area cries out for infrastructure development.

A National Work Corps (NWC) would be under the Minister of Villages' department but wholly controlled, directed and financed from the copra tax and local revenues. A locally controlled and directed NWC following developmental guidelines established by the government and Minister of Villages would safeguard it from becoming a political-militaristic tool as well as assure efficiency on the local level.

A minimal wage would be paid to the youths since necessary rural, agricultural and low technological skills needed for quality village living would be its essential goals. These skills would be gained not in a classroom atmosphere but in the field.²⁴ Such skills as would be necessary for adequate village housing, different sanitation models, playing fields, malaria control techniques would be stressed. In the area of economic infrastructure, they would work on road and bridge building, mail delivery, and new cash crops of citrus growing, cattle raising and scientific agricultural methods of subsistence crops. The NWC could be connected with the newly formed Area High Schools so as to have the necessary feedback and influence on this part of education.²⁵

²³ Ibid, no. 62, April 23, 1976, p. 1.

²⁴ Overseas volunteers; e.g., Peace Corps and U.N. Volunteers, and graduates from the area high schools are already teaching these skills to the village people.

²⁵ These schools are preparing for a rural setting rather than urban bias. They are the result of a study done by the Education Department in 1974.

Details of service, financing and a multitude of other details must be worked out in order to make this a workable concept.

e) Agricultural Quota System

A major drawback in planners's minds has been the traditional lack of response by the rural sector in national development. Part of the fault must be laid at the planners' feet, but not all. A Minister of Villages' (MV) office keeping the total agricultural picture in mind, the potentials of different areas and market concerns will allot quotas for all agricultural products. The MV's research unit and Council of Chiefs will give sufficient feedback to establish realistic quotas. Village project funding and allotment of the NWC to do village projects and local infrastructure will establish incentives for full rural participation.²⁶

2) Agricultural Bias

a) Subsistence Crops

The second element in a successful rural strategy is in the agricultural sector. This may seem a truism but the first order of business must be in the subsistence crop area and not in the cash crops.²⁷ The projected population increase for 1999 to 400,000 leaves little time to prepare the people for a new type of agriculture.²⁸ The traditional slash and burn method must give way to a more intensive farming technique using green manures, fertilizers,

²⁶Benedict Stavis, People's Communes and Rural Development in China, Center for International Studies, Cornell University, Ithaca, New York, 1974, chapter 3.

²⁷Roger Keesing, "Seeking Paths for Solomons Development," Pacific Perspective, vol. 2, no. 1, 1973, p. 26.

²⁸NDP, op. cit., vol. 1, p. 16.

rotation of crops and scientific agricultural practices. These take time to be understood and accepted and cannot be accomplished by a few simple education courses.

Politically it would be difficult at this time to introduce such an agricultural change but much easier than introducing them at the turn of the century when land will be scarce. However, simply introducing a subsistence agricultural revolution to the individual villager will not be successful. Enough proof is available indicating the ordinary peasant will not simply increase his marketable surplus by simply increasing his use of fertilizer and pesticides. A. V. Chaynov contends the peasant's production is geared to household size not the market place so that new inputs of fertilizer and pesticides would simply reduce his workload rather than motivate him for greater output for the market place.²⁹ Hence, a subsistence revolution must be worked communally, that is using the communal structure already operating in such farming ventures as coconut, cocoa and cattle plantations.

Most land in the Solomons is owned communally and individuals in the extended family have a right to use the land for subsistence gardening.³⁰ A subsistence revolution would then use the same land but work it as a group be it extended family, or village or district. The quotas established by the MV would then be more easily administered with the larger groupings rather than individual family units. The goal of food self-sufficiency by 1999 would be a distinct possibility and certainly would reverse the trend of dependency upon foreign foodstuffs now so evident.

²⁹Murray Bathgate, notes taken from his class on Changing Melanesia, March 10, 1976.

³⁰The communal aspect of life in the Solomons will be dealt with in the next section.

b) Cash Crops

Present cash crops, coconuts, cocoa and cattle schemes are not meeting the growing need for more money and other crops should be considered for the future. The fruit market potential would seem a natural for the Islands as well as have a growth factor for the future. In the case of some fruits, juice extraction should be part of the scheme so that alternative methods of product use would be available in a market glut.

Cash crops of rice and oil palms are now in the hands of foreign firms. The Commonwealth Development Corporation has developed oil palm plantations with an option for the Solomonese people to participate not only in the harvesting work but with plantings of their own.³¹

Rice is another question. C. Brewer and Company based in Hawaii bought out an Australian firm and in 1976 planted over 5,000 acres of rice with a 10,000 acre goal by 1979. Local participation will be limited to a labor force.

A definite plan of allowing Solomon Islanders to participate in ownership of both schemes should be considered. Government shares of the agribusiness would be but a first step while local participation and eventual ownership is the goal. Present investment theory certainly would fly in the face of such desires which encourages foreign investments without fear of nationalization.³²

3) Communal Social System

This element of rural strategy is more important than it appears at first reading. The people's culture is dominated by its communal viewpoint

³¹Tudor, op. cit., p. 439.

³²The Australian Financial Review, op. cit.

as a Westerner's is ruled by the individualist's view of reality. For instance, the leaders of Marching Rule, a nationalistic movement immediately following the Second World War, which sought to have some say in their own future and economic development, effectively used communal efforts to establish their goals.³³ Even when it was crushed by the government, other movements developed which carried on much the same program using communal rather than individual efforts for agriculture, building and education projects.³⁴

As stated previously any serious breakthrough in agricultural progress must attach itself to communal efforts as much as to family units. Food and cash crop quotas established by the MV's office can be realistically responded to through communal efforts but not through the individual nuclear family. The National Work Corps when seen in the context of a communal people's view of life is but an extension of it: into a new age group--youth. Too often in the past as in agricultural subsidies, individual families were seen to be the better loan risk than a community. Fortunately, this feeling is changing and communal projects are drawing the proper attention they deserve.

4) Rural Balance

Closely allied to the concept of communal lifestyle is that in any rural development there must be a balance. Once again, I call upon my own experience of development in a rural context. The Committee System, a name given to the self-help project mentioned above, operated on three interdependent levels:

³³Laracy, op. cit., p. 98.

³⁴I was instrumental in establishing the Committee System in the southern part of Malaita which constructed its own hospital, planted hundreds of acres of coconuts and in general improved the lives of the people through communal efforts.

- a) district
- b) village
- c) family

Each of the three levels were recognized as essential to sustain growth and to keep a balanced development in an area. Over emphasis in any of the levels led to a breakdown in all three. Tarapaina's plan for a huge plantation is an example. In 1970 they cleared and planted more than 65 acres of coconuts for the district but at the detriment of village and family goals. Many of the villages in the Tarapaina area had broken down houses but at the end of the year they boasted of a large planting scheme of coconuts. Fortunately, the leaders of the Tarapaina Committee saw the discrepancy and the next year's plan called for less district work and more village and family endeavors.

The NDP envisages Rural Trading and Marketing Centers (RTMC's) which will provide island level marketing and become copra buying points.³⁵ The assumption here is that the village has not only a marketable surplus but is eager to get into the market economy. Such is not the case in the Solomons or in many other peasant societies. Much more is needed since it's not simply a case of selling food to an urban area but a development of a people.

To more easily accomplish this, areas closer to home, call them mini-centers, must be sites for light industry around which market, administration and social centers would satellite. The cattle industry, for instance, is on its way to becoming a cash crop but the beasts must be shipped from all parts of the Solomons to only one port--Honiara. Should not four small

³⁵NDP, op. cit., vol. 2, p. 30.

butcheries--one for each of the four major areas, Auki, Gizo, Kira Kira and Marau Sound--with freezing units be established so as to siphon off some of the employment opportunities from the capitol, Honiara. Leather works and artistic working of leather products should be a spin off from the hides at each of these areas. On another level, a citrus crop scheme should plan for juice extraction using mechanical squeezers rather than electrical power. Cottage industries blessed by the research and development team of the MV's office could be funded by the same office as well as integrated into a truly national development plan.

C. COMMUNICATIONS

The vital link in a rural/urban development plan depends upon the nature of the communications pattern within a country. An emphasis on national identity, one of the over-riding objectives of the present Plan, depends upon a strong sense of oneness so lacking in this island community.³⁶ Pidgin English, the language of political consciousness, leaves the majority of women listeners unmoved because it is unintelligible to them. Letters take more than three weeks to travel the full length of the island chain. Some distant islands see a ship once a month while the urban area boasts the only paved roads in the Solomons. An automatic phone dialing service is available in Honiara but wireless service to semi-urban areas on other islands leaves much to be desired. Shipping service to the principle and only city, Honiara, thrives as does road and air transport while rural areas are sorely pressed in all three categories.³⁷

³⁶NDP, vol. 2, p. 1.

³⁷Ibid, vol. 1, p. 18.

Hence, a veritable revolution must occur in the communications sector before a rural/urban development plan is effective. Merely to increase rural communications without implementing the rural aspects of the plan already stated would but hasten the exodus from rural to urban areas. Failure to implement a total communications revision while striving to implement the rural strategy will fragment further the "still loosely-united Solomon Islands."³⁸ But these generalities must be reduced to practicality. What follows is a shortlist of recommendations.

Recommendations for Communications

1. Audio

- a) Radio Honiara must be expanded so as to easily cover all the islands in all kinds of weather.
- b) Entertainment must be second in broadcasting schedules. A well thought out program in Pidgin English concerning all aspects of rural/urban development is primary. The MV would be most important in this aspect since his research and development team and the NWC would be in direct contact with the people.
- c) Prepared tapes on all the above subjects would be given to the NWC who will be equipped with hundreds of battery operated, rugged but simple tape recorders.
 - The girls, especially, would be taught how to teach pidgin English to the women of the area.
 - A number of young people would be sent to the manufacturer to be taught how to repair these recorders in the field. This could be costed into the original contract.

2. Shipping

- a) In an island world as the Solomons, inter-island shipping is primary. All other forms of travel take second place.

³⁸Fisk, op. cit., p. 12.

- b) Shipping is essential for quicker mail delivery and getting subsistence and cash crops to mini-centers.

3. Financial Backing

- a) Auto, petrol, road and plane taxes should be earmarked for inter-island shipping.
- b) Phone tax used to subsidize low internal postage rates for first class mail.
- c) Preferential rates for locally-owned concerns operating ships to the remote areas.

D. URBAN STRATEGY

It is now time to study the urban part of the national development plan as it relates to the rural sector. A major part of the Solomons underdevelopment is directly related to the prodigious growth of the one urban area, Honiara. At last count, almost 15,000 people, 7.6 per cent of the total society, now reside in the capitol with an average 5.7 per cent increase yearly.³⁹ The strategy needed at this time must be aimed at slowing this growth pattern, turning it around and not encouraging it. Hence, the following recommendations must be seen in this light.

Recommendations

1. Government

The most serious offender at centralization is government and since it is the major employer in the Islands any dispersal of government functions could be a step in the right direction. Such departments as education, agriculture and natural resources could operate as effectively outside of Honiara as they do within the urban area.

2. Private Industry

Tax incentives should be given for industry locating outside Honiara as well as tax penalties for those centering in the urban areas. All industries in the urban area should be taxed

³⁹The Drum, *op. cit.*, no. 62, p. 1.

according to the social costs incurred because of concentrating on being in town. These costs are difficult to figure out but nonetheless real. Special rates for electricity and water use should be levied as well as with other services of the community. This income would go to underwriting the costs of installing them to other communities outside the urban area.

A transportation tax would be graded with the private car attracting the highest tax with less taxes for trucks, motorcycles and tractors in that order. Bicycles and pedicabs would be taxed only slightly. Most of these revenues would be used for inter-island shipping.

3. Individuals

There could be a tax incentive for those returning home for agricultural purposes and a tax penalty for those residing in the urban area.

All foreign food could be taxed and the funds used to subsidize root crops transported from rural areas. Root crops would be a bit more expensive in town but still much less expensive than foreign foodstuffs.

Education possibilities kept static in town but increased significantly in the rural areas.

Schools, prisons and correction institutions located in rural areas should grow their own food.

IV. SUMMARY

To have a national plan integrating rural and urban sectors, both partners must be of equal strength. Allow one sector to dominate and the plan skews, and if continued over many years, underdevelopment is the price paid. The Solomons colonial history as well as the first years of self-determination have skewed development far to the urban sector with serious consequences to the economy and development of the whole country. The need now is to bring it back into balance with a strong emphasis on the rural sector even at the expense of the urban for a number of years.

Such a course of action demands the greatest political will because there are as many home grown sharks as foreign ones which see the Solomons as their private feeding ground.⁴⁰ A number of the elite, some educated abroad, see these islands as a private preserve and give little concern for the rural areas except in speech. Since 1970 the Solomonese outnumbered the expatriates in the Legislative Council and have not as yet reversed the trend of making Honiara the center of all development. The present NDP gives more of the same trend in spite of the known dangers of the population explosion which is more serious than expected with the findings of the census of February, 1976.⁴¹

The alternative to a rural/urban plan is one based on big mining projects or other large commercial ventures. A development based on large commercial ventures alone will be chosen not because of their intrinsic worth to the Islands but fear that it is the only road to development left open. This paper has attempted to outline that ANOTHER DEVELOPMENT lies open but only if a concentrated effort is made to understand the wealth of their rural heritage and to forcefully and intelligently exploit it in conjunction with the urban sector for a truly Solomonese development. The route chosen in the late '70s will dictate the character of the Solomons in the year 2000 and beyond.

⁴⁰This is in reference to the analogy used by the Chief Minister, Mr. Mamaloni in his speech on Self-government Day, Jan. 2, 1976.

⁴¹The Drum, op. cit., no. 62, p. 1.

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